

LINE COPY

November 1998 Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department



Special Edition

Nairobi, Kenya





Glenn A. Gaines

"Because this disaster was the result of terrorism, it created great concern for the safety of our personnel."

From The Fire Chief . . .

The response to Nairobi provoked numerous emotions.

The American people were experiencing another assault aimed at our country and its citizens. Our Urban Search & Rescue Team had once again been deployed overseas this time to respond to a manmade disaster driven by terrorism. Because this disaster was the result of terrorism, it created great concern for the safety of our personnel.

This concern was heightened given the requirement of operating in a foreign country. Much of the early discussion and planning for the activation and sustained operations centered around security for our personnel. After personal discussions with Mr. Peter Bradford of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, I felt better learning that he had visited Nairobi on several occasions and was familiar with the city and its culture. I was also pleased to learn that he was to accompany our team on the mission.

This particular activation occurred during prime vacation time. Many of the division deputy chiefs were on leave. In fact, only three senior staff members were in town during the activation. Section heads and front line personnel were challenged to meet the requirements of mobilizing our team.

I want to express my personal compliments to the personnel from Resource Management, Support Services, support staff from Operations, and our volunteer personnel for providing outstanding support to our team during mobilization, while in Nairobi, and upon their return. Numerous field personnel worked long hours while the team was deployed, providing back fill services and support to family members. The personnel of Fire Station 18 worked especially hard during the activation. I also want to thank the Public Information and Life Safety Education Section for everything they did in support of the mission, including this special issue of Line Copy.

I was extremely proud of the team members, and how they conducted themselves during deployment under very difficult conditions. This particular deployment challenged each team member and especially the team leadership. Our personnel served as outstanding ambassadors for our country and our Department. I want to thank and commend everyone who played a role in a successful deployment. I remain committed to the program and to supporting team personnel and their families. Well done Virginia Task Force 1.

Glenn A. Gaines, *Fire Chief*
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International Response – A Systems Approach

By Battalion Chief Mike Tamillow
Task Force Leader, VA TF-1
Battalion 3, B-Shift

At 1100 hours on Friday, August 7, 1998, we received an activation order from the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) for response to the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. It had been a long time since we fully deployed for international response with OFDA. The last time was July 1990 for the earthquake in Baguio, Philippines. Despite the time lapse, we immediately began mobilization procedures designed to field a 62-person international response team and organize a 55,000 pound equipment cache within the 4 to 6 hour time frame. It was also decided to take vehicles on this mission and add three additional personnel to the team—a total of 65.

We were able to meet the stringent mobilization requirements by relying on well developed procedures—a systems approach which ensured that all details were addressed to ensure an effective response. In the same way that the initial minutes of a working fire are stressful, the initial efforts to begin our mobilization seemed chaotic. Captain I Bernard D. Bickham (Station 18, B-Shift) and Captain I Robert C. Dubé (Academy) began notification procedures from the Academy. It took more than an hour to get task force management personnel into the Academy to assist in the mobilization process. Once we assembled Task Force Leaders and Team Managers, we began to implement our Task Force Mobilization Procedures (luckily we had recently revised this six-year-old document for the third time).

All elements were identified in the Mobilization Procedures document and organized in functional groups. This includes task force staffing selections, equipment cache preparations, liaison and media coordination, medication/drug procurement, passport and aircraft passenger manifests, food and water procurement, person-

nel in-processing and medical screening, department backfill and OFDA Operations Center staffing, etc. Each group was reduced to bulleted items on a single page that is assigned to one or more responsible personnel to address. As such, a significant and diverse number of extremely important details are effectively handled. We had all personnel in-processed and the cache read for transport in approximately five hours.

The travel to Kenya was not short. Despite the Air Force conducting two midair refuelings of the two C5-A Galaxy military transport aircraft, it still took more than 16 hours to reach Nairobi. This city of 2.5 million people is situated approximately 100 miles south of the equator at an altitude of approximately 5,400 feet. The winter weather was mostly cloudy throughout our eight-day stay, being quite cool in the mornings and warming up to the high 70s during the day.

We arrived at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport at approximately 0415 hours local Nairobi time. As outlined in our response procedures, we staffed a nine-person Advance Team from our task force and, after securing transportation, moved ahead of the rest of the task force

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(who remained at the airport to unload and move the equipment cache). We were transported into the city to the embassy and explosion site.

At 0530 hours we met with the commander of the Israeli rescue team (a two-star general) and advised him that we were in country and would be setting up. The Israeli team had arrived earlier and had been operating for the past ten hours. Understandably, they were not allowed access to the embassy itself due to security. They focused their efforts on the collapsed seven-story Ufundi House immediately next to the embassy. This building had totally collapsed with many people inside, and there was much work to be done. Despite this fact, it was physically a small rubble pile that did not allow two full Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) teams to operate on. The commanding officer made it clear to us that they were operating satisfactorily and did not require our assistance.

However, due to the excellent interpersonal skills, knowledge and abilities, and professionalism of our personnel, we began incorporating ourselves into the rescue operation.

The OFDA/FEMA US&R Programs have well developed operational procedures, position descriptions, position identifications (vests), set-up manuals and operational checklists. We have trained extensively on this.

These attributes, coupled with the professionalism and dedication of our personnel, allowed an amazingly complex set of actions and requirements unfold in a short amount of time. As a Search and Recon Team was being deployed (in concert with counterparts from the Israeli

team) to perform sweeps of heavily damaged buildings that ringed the explosion site, a significant portion of our task force personnel immediately began off-loading and organizing the equipment cache and setting up our Base of Operations. Simultaneously, task force command staff were interacting with the embassy staff, the Diplomatic Security Service (essentially the State Department's security), U.S. Marines, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other assets that were involved in this mission. It was gratifying to stand back and watch our personnel perform their jobs in an effective manner with visible results. It is important to have a well defined

system and then employ it as designed.

The commitment to establish operational procedures and practices was maintained throughout the course of the eight-day mission. As designed, the task force was split into red and blue teams allowing us to operate 24 hours per day,

in twelve-hour operational shifts. It was a complex task to go from initial set-up to rotating operational shifts.

As usual, political and media concerns are always a significant aspect to this type of mission that require constant attention. We experienced some anti-American sentiments from some sections of the local people. Early media reports (that seemed to dominate the African and European news broadcasts) that our US&R team was only assisting Americans in the embassy were false. It was difficult but very important to do whatever we could to correctly portray what we



Task Force Leaders Battalion Chief Michael Tamillow (left-center), Deputy Chief James M. Strickland (Retired) (left-front), Pete Henderson (OFDA) (left-rear), Dr. Anthony Macintyre (right-front), and Deputy Chief John J. Brown (right-rear) discuss mission plans while en route to Nairobi, Kenya on the C-5A Galaxy aircraft.

were doing to help not only the embassy staff but the local Kenyans in whatever way we could.

At the conclusion of our mission, in an effort of good will to provide as much assistance as possible, OFDA made the decision to donate a significant portion of our task force cache to the local Kenyans so they could continue to help themselves after our departure. This included: two department vehicles (the tractor-trailer unit and the Service 2 truck, laptop computers, generators, a Hurst tool system, and two Stanley hydraulic concrete breaching systems. In total, the donated equipped was valued at more than \$400,000.

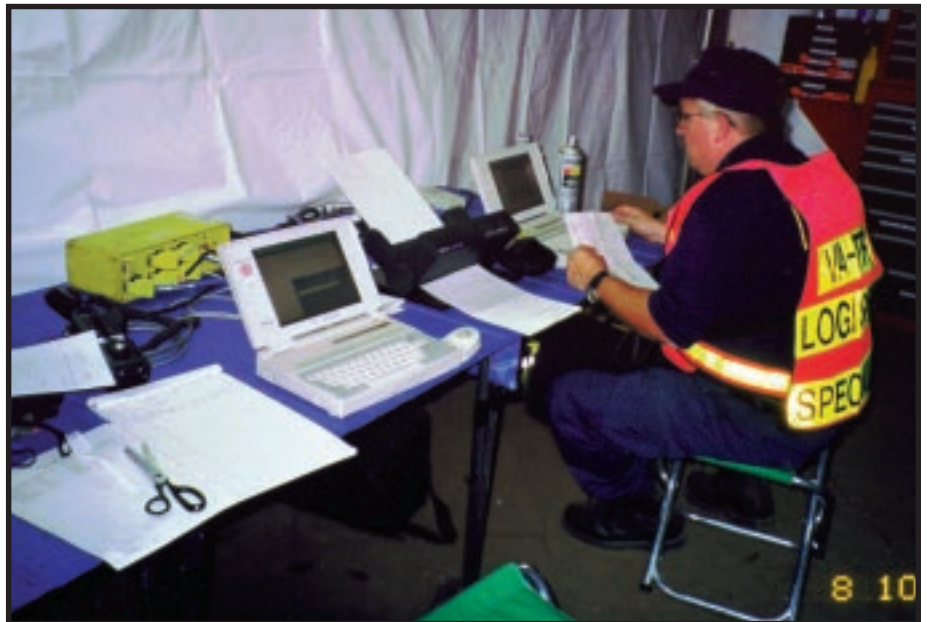
Our logistics personnel in Kenya were working by satellite phone with Resource Management personnel to immediately order replacement equipment. All items had been identified and purchase orders cut before we departed from Kenya — an amazing feat.

These actions illustrate what can be accomplished by adhering to well designed operational procedures and system management concepts. A US&R task force is an incredibly proficient asset capable of providing a wide array of search and rescue tactics simultaneously and in a short time period. Analyzing the components of a tactical assignment, developing operational procedures and then training on and improving them must constitute the basis of any life-saving endeavor.

I would like to congratulate all the personnel on this task force, as well as the many people who worked this mission state-side, for a job well done. I would also like to thank the County and Department senior staff for their backing and commitment to our program. We have learned much from past responses, and rededicate ourselves to learning from this mission as well and improving for the future. ❖



Virginia Task Force 1 team members train Israeli team personnel in the operations of various types of search and rescue equipment contained in the VA TF1 equipment cache.



Technician Clyde Buchanan, one of six logistics specialists, checks the equipment cache at the bombing site. Logistics specialist worked by satellite phone directly with Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department personnel in the Resource Management Section to immediately order equipment to replace the task force equipment cache that was donated to the Nairobi Fire Department.



The American Embassy (left,) located on side four of the Ufundi Building explosion site, along with several other buildings was the focus of USAID SAR Team 1's immediate priority.

Lending Assistance in a Foreign Land

*By Captain II Dewey H. Perks
Plans Officer, VA TF-1
Station 28, B-Shift*

Terrorists again targeted America when they suddenly attacked the United States Embassies in Africa on August 7, 1998. The explosions that occurred in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, were part of a well coordinated attack that injured thousands and killed hundreds of innocent people. As reports of the numbers injured and reports of extensive damage began to surface, managers of Virginia Task Force 1 began their assessment of the incident.

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department has enjoyed a long relationship with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). This response branch of the Agency for International Development (AID) has a long history of rendering assistance throughout the world in times of need, and strongly influenced the development of modern day urban search and rescue operations. To provide this capability, OFDA uses specialized teams from Miami-Dade County, Florida, and

our Department to deploy worldwide when tragedy strikes.

As the pictures began to roll in from the broadcast media, task force members watched as the memories of Oklahoma City flashed through their minds. Again, a bomb had exploded leaving a large swath of death and destruction in its wake. Again, innocent people had been killed and injured because they happened to be in or near a United States federal building. Again, a terrorist had ensured that as much collateral damage as possible was done, with no feeling of remorse.

Task force managers immediately began the established call-down procedure to ensure the readiness of our personnel and equipment. Telephone calls were also placed to Department senior staff and OFDA staff to provide an information briefing and to provide contact information.

At approximately 1015 hours, I received a call from Mr. Pete Bradford (OFDA), who requested two canine search teams be deployed to help in the rescue mission in Kenya. Conversations continued with the decision being made at 1045 hours that Sonja Heritage (with canine Otto) and I would join an AID Advance Team, while the task force was in processing for the activation.

As the task force began to mobilize at the Academy, Sonja and I traveled to Andrews Air Force Base to meet our team. As we received our briefing, we were informed that our flight would take us to Naval Air Station Rota, Spain, and then on to Nairobi following a ground refueling. This was the first clear directive we had received concerning our ultimate destination. As we went wheels up, the task force completed the process of activating 63 additional members (with three additional canines) and went on to Andrews for their flight.

While en route to Spain, I received several briefings and was able to gather information that would be critical once we arrived in Kenya, concerning building composition, casualty estimates, safety and security, 9-1-1 availability, vector concerns, and infrastructure damage. While the task force awaited their plane at Andrews, concerns surfaced regarding providing on-site transportation for our group once we arrived in Kenya. Under normal international deployment conditions, the affected country or the requesting agency provides this vital component, but this deployment could not be considered normal in that it was a terrorist incident nearly 8,500 miles from Fairfax County. It was determined that we would transport both our semi-tractor trailer and Service 2 (12' box style truck) to Kenya for this purpose. OFDA had tasked the Department of Defense (DOD) with supplying a C5-A Galaxy for the mission, but it was quickly determined that a second similar air transport craft would be necessary for the deployment. Besides the normal 55,000 pounds of equipment and 65 personnel, the task force had cached additional water and food, as re-supply could not be guaranteed.

Down time awaiting air transportation is very common in search and rescue missions of this type. Awareness of the shrinking size of DOD assets has led to more ground travel deployments within the continental United States, but when that is not an option, the task force uses this waiting period to gather additional information on changing incident events, contacting the Centers for Disease Control for health information, and short-term training. Training may seem out of place during this period, but a constant review of response guidelines and developing operational strategies based on them ensures an effective plan of action.

After arriving in Spain, I contacted the task force to provide an information briefing and to check their departure status. Deputy Chief John J. Brown, Jr., (Operations) informed me that things were on schedule and that the team would be departing from Andrews at approximately 0100 hours on August 8, 1998. As my plane prepared to take off, it suddenly developed a mechanical problem. The problem eventually caused the tasking of a replacement aircraft to complete our travel. Meanwhile, the task force was loaded onto two C5-A Galaxys with a mid-flight aerial refueling planned. During this maneuver, a proper seal could not be maintained and the lead C5-A Galaxy was nearly forced to land to take on fuel. However, the aircraft Flight Commander sensed the importance of the mission and arranged a second aerial refueling that was successful.

A FEMA based search and rescue team uses an Operational Systems Description as its guideline for on-scene operations at a disaster site. Using these guidelines, equipment was divided at Andrews to ensure the team could perform advance work, choose a Base of Operations (BO) site, perform search and reconnaissance, and structural triage, at the incident location. Both the Advance Team and Task Force arrived in Nairobi at nearly the same time. Task Force members were dispatched to the Embassy to assess the damage and determine a BO site, while the remaining members began to off-load the airplane for the short trip to the site. A planning meeting was held to

exchange information and determine the group's action for the next 2 to 4 hours.

All told, the group had traveled about 17 hours to reach its destination. Plans also had to be carried out to house and feed the members and to formulate an Incident Action Plan. Deputy Chief Brown and I were tasked as Plans Officers for the mission, so it would be our job to coordinate all directions given by Battalion Chief Michael Tamillow (Operations) and Retired Deputy Chief James M. Strickland, Task Force Leaders, into an effective plan.

Due to security concerns, OFDA directed that the group be quartered and fed at a local hotel. During national responses, the task force is self sufficient for 72 hours. The group led by Battalion Chief Tamillow arrived at the embassy and immediately reported to the Joint Operations Command Post. The Israeli Defense Force, who had already arrived and begun to work at the collapsed Ufundi House, had established this area. A search and rescue unit from France had also arrived and was immediately incorporated into the joint rescue force. Plans were then made for the equipment to be setup within a secured perimeter abutting the damaged embassy. In coordination with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Evidence Response Team (FBI/ERT), the selected area was cleaned of debris and readied for the arrival of the equipment. Our team, now identified as the USAID SAR Team 1, was directed to immediately begin reconnaissance of the embassy building and several other buildings that had been in the path of the explosion's shock waves.

The hotel selected for our use was within three blocks of the bomb site, so we quickly called the members into formation to begin the short walk to the site. During this trek, members began to observe the explosion patterns as they surveyed the damaged buildings. Nearly every building assessed in this three-block area had suffered damage, including shattered glass and marred exteriors. Within one block of the embassy, members who had deployed to Oklahoma City remarked of the similarity of the two disasters; the same noises (jack hammers and heavy equipment operating), the same

sights (cranes towering over the bomb site and ever present cloud of dust), and the same unforgettable smell of death.

Once on the scene, the team was formed to receive a briefing for its leaders. The team is designed to be two deep in all positions and to allow for continuous operations by dividing it into Red and Blue Teams. When this was completed, it was decided to operate as a whole during the first hours of the operation to ensure that all immediate requests for assistance could be honored. This also allowed sufficient members to be available to unpack the remaining equipment cache that was soon to arrive.

The embassy compound is situated on the corners of Moi Avenue and Halle Selassie Avenue which is known as one of the busiest intersections in Nairobi. The terrorists had entered the compound and attempted to drive into the embassy's underground parking garage. When this was not successful, the vehicle drove past the parking entrance and detonated. This area resembled an open courtyard, with the Cooperative Bank Building on the left, the Ufundi House straight ahead, and the embassy on the right. The Cooperative Bank and embassy structures sustained considerable surface blast effect damage and some smoke damage from the resulting vehicle fires. The Ufundi House, however, had borne the brunt of the damage from the explosion. Once a five-story building housing offices and a secretarial college, it had been reduced to a rubble pile that included most of the patterns seen in a severe collapse, including pancake, lean-to, and several voids of varying size. Kenyan rescuers had already ensured that all surface victims had been transported to hospitals and continued to provide excellent assistance to the joint rescue force. The Israelis, as mentioned earlier, had arrived first and according to international guidelines had coordinated well with the local authorities in developing an Incident Action Plan. The French and American contingents were integrated into that plan to assist, or lead in the rescue effort, based upon the task at hand.

When we established the command area of the BO, we received additional requests for assistance. During the mission, more than 100

such requests were received and completed by the team. These requests included supplying staff and equipment to assist with search operations at the Ufundi House and widening the search of collaterally damaged buildings. The team was also tasked with forcing entry into security vaults throughout the embassy, providing continuous assistance to embassy staff (removal of documents and equipment), and providing around-the-clock medical care to the rescue force, including members of other federal agencies. The team also provided staff and equipment to the FBI/ERT as they began the arduous task of determining the cause of the explosion.

The team's medical unit was indeed very busy during this mission. As with any deployment, its primary focus was to ensure the health of team members (including canines) and to render immediate life saving intervention to those patients encountered during rescue operations. While in Nairobi, the medical unit also found that it was responsible for the care and well being of staff assigned with OFDA, the embassy, the FBI, the U.S. Marines and Seabees, the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), and the Kenyan rescuers. Members of each of these groups received medical treatment from the team before being demobilized.

Unfortunately, the search mission at the Ufundi House turned, as it did in Oklahoma City, into a recovery operation when it became obvious that no additional survivors would be found in the rubble. During this phase, our members were constantly amazed at the strong will of the Kenyan rescuers, who constantly took the lead in the grim task of body recovery.

As work was done to clear the site of the last debris, an observance was conducted to bring together the joint rescue force to honor those who were injured or had paid the ultimate sacrifice. The flags of Kenya, France, Israel, and the United States were placed at half-staff over the site, as a somber wreath laying ceremony took place.

We then completed plans to demobilize the team and return home. OFDA made special arrangements for the transfer of critically needed rescue equipment and medical supplies to the

Kenyan authorities, with training provided on the use of the equipment. The medical supplies were given to assist with the resupply of those expended in treating the blast victims.

The team returned to Andrews Air Force Base on August 16, 1998, where Chief Gaines and OFDA/AID dignitaries greeted them. The members were soon rejoined with their families for the short bus ride back to the Fire and Rescue Academy, for a "Welcome Home" reception. At 2130 hours, the team was deactivated.

The team felt that this was a successful mission, with all assigned tasks completed. We would not have realized a major portion of this success without the on scene assistance provided by OFDA staff members Pete Bradford, Peter Henderson, Sydel Maher, and Steve Catlin. Their constant presence and ability to quickly rectify problems or alleviate concerns allowed the team to concentrate on its mission assignments. The Department also played a major role by providing daily teleconferences to the families of deployed members that gave them constant updates on the team's status.

Most search and rescue teams like ours are developed to provide assistance following natural disasters, such as earthquakes and hurricanes. Terrorism and its threat are now constantly on everyone's mind, especially since this was the second terrorist incident that our team has been called on to assist with. The team represents our Department whenever we are sent on a mission and proudly flies its flag over our base of operations.

It is the team's hope that the suffering of those injured and the pain felt by the families of those killed will soon be eased, and that there will never be a need for a similar deployment. In the meantime, the team stands ready, as does the rest of our Department, to place it *on-the-line* when duty calls. ❖

Drill Time in Nairobi

*By Captain I Robert C. Dubé
Rescue Team Manager, VA TF-1
Fire and Rescue Academy*

On Friday, August 14, after our operations were winding down, we were requested to send some team members to a ceremony hosted by the American ambassador to Kenya at which time we were to donate to the Nairobi fire department almost \$350,000 of equipment including the small service truck (Service 2) we had brought with us. Through the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and USAID, we were to donate this equipment, as well as several thousand dollars of medical supplies, to the local Red Cross. The federal government would then purchase replacement items for our cache.

During this ceremony, I met the Nairobi fire chief and he requested our team train his personnel to operate the equipment we donated. I agreed and he said he would send his car to pick me up later that afternoon.

After conferring with the task force leaders, we agreed to send four of our personnel to complete this training with the Nairobi Fire Department. That afternoon, the chief's car picked up Lieutenant Ben A. Dye, Master Technician Christian A. Bastin, Technician Bean A. Scott and drove us to the main Nairobi fire station. The chief, a 33-year veteran, informed me he had called back his entire off-duty shift for the drill. This meant there was almost 100 students. (I wonder if he used the call-back list?)

The Nairobi fire department has three stations in the city to cover the almost two million citizens. They have very old English style equipment, most of which seemed to be either broken down or in need of repair. The

main station was built in 1895 and not much had been done since.

The bathroom facility was a perfect example of the rest of the station, it was a 20'x 20' room, concrete floor with dividers. A small trench was cut in the floor and there were wooden boxes to "sit" on. That was it. No commodes, urinals, paper, nothing. I'll never complain about any county facility, trailer or otherwise, ever again.

Another example was the bunk room. There were only old metal bunk beds with open springs to lie on—no mattress or box springs.

The average salary is \$80 per month.

We spent the next four hours explaining how to use the tools we donated, which included Hurst equipment, Stanley concrete breakers and saws, a Cobra drill, and several other small tools. We also gave them a class on the operations of the service truck.

They were very enthusiastic, asked lots of questions and received all the "tool time" they wanted. When we were getting ready to leave, the mayor of the city showed up along with several members of the city council and thanked us for the donation and especially for the time we had taken to give the class. They presented us with a Nairobi fire helmet (yes it has a face shield) and then drove us back to our hotel.

I would like to take this time to thank Master Technician Bastin, Lieutenant Dye, and Technician Scott for their outstanding work during this drill. Master Technician Bastin, Lieutenant Dye, and Technician Scott were friendly, helpful and above all, true diplomats for the United States. ♦



Technician Dean A. Scott (left) and Master Technician Christian A. Bastin (right) demonstrate the use of a Stanley hydraulic chainsaw to members of the Nairobi Fire Department.

Communications Plays Vital Role

By Frank Stoda

Captain I Gerald Jaskulski

Communications Specialist, VA TF-1

Headquarters, Communications Section

On August 7, 1998, terrorists bombed the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. That same day Fairfax County's Urban Search and Rescue Team, Virginia Task Force 1, was activated to go to the bomb sight in Nairobi, Kenya. Because this was a terrorist attack in a foreign land, communications was to play a vital role in helping to keep the team safe.

When the task force arrived at the embassy, the communications specialists handed out a portable radio and a spare battery to each team member. Because of security, it was important for each team member to be able to communicate with the rest of the task force at all times.

As the communications cache was unloaded, the communications center was established and the equipment was placed in service. A repeater and antenna were placed on top of the embassy and a power cord was extended to the ground for power. With the repeater in place, any member of the team could be contacted anywhere in and around Nairobi.

With local communications established, communications with the outside world was now needed. The satellite phone was located and set up near the communications center. The phone was tested, and the first call made was to the Uniformed Fire Officer at the Public Safety Communications Center (PSCC). With the phone working, an extension was run to the command center and tested. A second satellite phone was then installed. With local and long distance communications working, we set up the communications center.

At the communications center, two control stations were made operational for dispatching and monitoring communications from the task force. Two six-gang portable battery chargers were set up and recharging portable radio batteries began. Batteries were placed in

two cartons, one for recharging and one for charged batteries.

The communications team then took charge of dispatch operations monitoring and logging all radio communications. These logs were used as part of the daily report that was sent back to the United States. We were also the team's "receptionists" answering the satellite phones and finding the parties who were called. The night shift communications specialist was also required to fax all needed data back to the United States. At times this would take several hours to fax the amount of data needed.

Communications specialists were also charged with keeping track of all team personnel, including the USAID personnel, while in Nairobi. We were also charged with tracking the U.N. personnel who was on duty at the bombing. This was accomplished through the use of a status board and radio communications.

This was the first mission where communications specialists received no assistance from outside agencies. The infrastructure in Nairobi was completely destroyed. We had to completely rebuild the communication infrastructure from the ground up. All of our team training and new equipment really paid off.

This terrible tragedy did have a silver lining. By the sheer magnitude of the situation in Nairobi our skills were developed to a higher level. If our services are needed in the future, we will be able to provide a higher level of service to our team.

Due to the many hours preparing the cache at home, the hours of training, and the special talents of each member, Virginia Task Force 1 Communications Specialists were able to provide good reliable communications that, in part, helped make the Nairobi mission go smoothly. ♦

Hot Shots

Photographs in this special edition of Line Copy were provided by several members of Fairfax County's Urban Search & Rescue Team who were deployed to Nairobi, Kenya.





Embassy Bombing in Kenya, Africa

*By Lieutenant Mike P. Regan
Search Team Manager, VA TF-1
Station 29, B-Shift*

Arrival

After a 17-hour flight we arrived at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport at approximately 4 a.m. Nairobi time. Unlike past missions only part of our tool cache arrived with us. Due to the anticipated lack of on-site transportation of our equipment, we decided to transport both our tractor trailer and Service 2 (a 12 foot truck). We deployed with more than 56,000 pounds of equipment, including additional food and water and 65 personnel. We now needed two C5-A Galaxy aircrafts which arrived five hours apart. While part of the team unloaded the contents of the first plane onto flatbed trucks, an advance team was sent to the blast site. The advance team did a survey of the area and met with the Israeli team that had arrived at the site ten hours prior. We were transported via a bus to a local hotel where we were assigned rooms and dropped off our personal gear.

The advance team reported to the hotel and gave a situation briefing to the team. The Israelis were focusing their efforts on the Ufundi Building, located directly behind the Embassy building. It was a five-story building with a penthouse. It had sustained substantial damage, resulting in a pancake collapse.

During the team briefing, the advance team said our Base of Operations (BO) and tool cache would be located next to the Embassy inside a secure area that had been fenced off by U.S. Marines. For the duration of the operation we would be known as USAID/SAR Team 1. For security reasons, we were told to always walk in groups. After the meeting we walked the one-half mile to the site where our equipment was waiting.

Upon our arrival, every member of the task force was needed to meet initial operational requirements. This included: set up of BO,

search and reconnaissance activities, equipment cache setup, and rescue operations. We started unloading, putting together our base of operations, and immediately began to work.

After the BO was operational, the Task Force Leader, Battalion Chief Michael Tamillow (Battalion 3, B-Shift), began to prepare for 24-hour operations. Half of the team was sent back to the hotel to eat and rest for a short period. We had already been operating for more than 24 hours with little rest.

The half of the team that had rested returned to the site at approximately 2130 hours. At that time, the task force was split into the red and blue teams. The red team worked from 0800 to 2000 and was relieved by the blue team for the second 12-hour shift.

The team managers reported to the site a half hour before the rest of the team to exchange information. The rescue squads were relieved at their individual work sites. This allowed for continuous operations with no down time.

The scene

As we got closer to the site, members who had been deployed to the Oklahoma City bombing remarked of the similarities of the two disasters. Debris still covered much of the street where the Kenyans were working. All buildings surrounding the embassy suffered severe damage. Everywhere we looked, we saw broken windows, doors blown off hinges, and a tremendous amount of glass covering the streets. The roof was blown off a large railroad depot about 200 yards from the site.

The 25-story building behind the embassy was nothing but a skeletal frame. It seemed like the blast had ripped through the whole building leaving just the shell. Overturned cars that had been burned in the blast still remained. Hun-

dreds of local Kenyans were working on the Ufundi Building using several cranes and other types of heavy equipment. The Embassy building had many of the windows blown out; several were still in place but bubbled out because of the bullet proof glass. Several large trees that had once surrounded the embassy were blown over. We heard the familiar sounds of jack hammers and heavy equipment and saw the cranes towering over the pile. There was the ever present dust and the unforgettable smell of death.

Search and Reconnaissance Operations

While on the plane it was determined which personnel would be on the first reconnaissance team. The reconnaissance team would consist of

- 1 Search Team Manager
Lieutenant Michael P. Regan
- 2 K-9's and handlers - Heidi Yamaguclli and Sonja Heritage
- 1 Technical Search Specialist
Technician Chris M. Matsos
- 2 Rescue Specialists
Master Technician Randal A. Leatherman and Technician Robert J. Zoldos
- 1 Structural Engineer - Renato Rauzzolo
- 1 Haz Mat Specialist
Lieutenant James J. Walsh
- 1 Safety Officer - Captain I Charles S. Ruble

The advance team reported that the Embassy Building had received heavy damage and needed to be searched as soon as possible. They also reported that eight (that number would later rise to nine) people were missing in the Embassy Building. Since only part of our search equipment had arrived, we started our reconnaissance with limited equipment. Only one search camera was available (fiber optic) and small hand tools. Our K-9's and their handlers were our best options for the search, and we were able to obtain spray paint and markers for building marking.

From the outside, the embassy looked damaged but the damage inside was much greater in comparison. Our reconnaissance would begin on the fourth floor. That is where

most of the eight reported missing people were located before the blast.

Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance of the Embassy Building presented several obstacles we hadn't encountered before, the first and largest was security. Several areas of the Embassy Building contained sensitive or highly classified documents. We were required to have a member of the Embassy Security Team with us at all times. This caused us to keep the reconnaissance group together, our structural engineer was not able to check ahead of the Search Team for structural hazards while the team searched. This process slowed us down greatly. After reconnaissance of the fourth and fifth floors, the escort understood our standard operating procedures and allowed the structural engineer and the haz mat specialist to advance with him while the K-9 and Technical Search searched the area behind them.

The reconnaissance team entered the Embassy at 11 a.m. The outside of the building appeared to be in good condition. Once inside on the ground floor, we could see that the inside was just as bad as the outside. The ground floor, as was every floor, was covered with waist high debris.

As we started up the stairway to the fourth floor, our escort, who had lost many co-workers in the blast, began to describe the scene inside the building shortly after the blast. The stairway walls were covered with bloody hand prints. The floor and steps were covered with large pools of dried blood. The building had a strong, unpleasant odor to it. It was the same odor that we smelled in Armenia and the Philippines.

The building was dark and hand lights were needed in most areas. As we arrived at the fourth floor, our structural engineer pointed out several areas that needed immediate attention in the elevator lobby.

The elevator doors had been blown off, leaving open elevator shafts. Many of the interior walls were made of concrete block, and most were heavily damaged or knocked down from

the force of the blast. He also determined that only one of the two stairwells were stable enough to be used. In each case, the areas of concern were clearly marked using the US&R marking system.

After our structural engineer surveyed the fourth floor, our K-9 team began their search. The dogs and their handlers worked through the waist high rubble while two rescue specialists kept a close eye on them. Each time one of the dogs alerted or showed interest in an area the location was marked and noted on a hand drawn map. The areas of interest were then checked by technical search specialists. Using the fiber optic camera, the search of the fourth floor yielded no live finds; however, many body parts were found. Search of the other four floors ended with the same results.

Two rescue squads were called to assist with the search on the ground and third floors. They concentrated their efforts on removing the debris in areas that were inaccessible to the reconnaissance team. The reconnaissance team then moved to the basement and sub-basement areas. The hazardous materials specialist and safety officer discovered that the blast had ruptured a diesel fuel tank and sewer line, leaving about fourteen inches of fuel and raw sewage in the subbasement.

Over the next few days we searched over six office buildings, including the 25-story Cooperative Bank Building where a mother and her son were found hiding on the 22 floor three days after the blast. The reconnaissance team found much of the same in all the other buildings. Office hallways and stairways were covered with bloody foot and hand prints.

Many of the team members were veterans of the Oklahoma City bombing and understand the types of evidence the FBI was looking for. Anytime pieces of cars or trucks were found inside a building, the FBI would be notified, and they would send an evidence technician to collect it. Some of the reconnaissance efforts were combined with the Israeli's K-9 team. We were asked to force entry into security vaults throughout the embassy and provided continuous assistance to embassy staff to remove documents and equip-

ment as well as provide a round the clock medical care to the rescue force, including members of other federal agencies.

The team's medical unit was kept busy during the course of events in Kenya. Their primary task was to provide medical care to the team, including the canines, and to provide immediate lifesaving intervention to victims rescued at the site. During this mission, they were responsible for the care of the staff assigned with OFDA, the embassy, the FBI, U.S. Marines and Seabees, the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), and the Kenyan rescuers.

Day Operations at Ufundi House

Captain I Robert C. Dubé and I met with the General of the Israeli National Rescue Team. He requested we bring our technical search equipment to the top of the remains of the Ufundi House. They had uncovered a void space and after a K-9 search, wanted to use the search cam to view areas inaccessible to the K-9.

The French team, using their listening device had reported tapping in the area of the void space. A member of the Israeli team and I entered the void with the search cam and began probing small void spaces that were off the larger one. Although we didn't find the source of the tapping, we did know where it wasn't coming from. This allowed the Israelis to concentrate their efforts in other areas.

We offered our assistance with our Stanley concrete breaking tools, and they agreed it would speed up operations. One U.S. Rescue Squad and Rescue Sector Officer and a small tool cache assisted the Israelis at the Ufundi House. We would rotate the rescue squads every two hours. A large number of Kenyans were working using only their bare hands. Our tool cache contained many small hand tools such as bolt cutters, shovels, and sledge hammers. These tools were offered to them, and they made good use of them.

The search camera was in great demand. Master Technician Thomas J. Griffin (Station 18, A-Shift), one of our technical search special-

ists, would complete one search and go right to another, working closely with the Israelis. Both groups began to get a better understanding of how the other worked. The Israeli Rescue Sector Officer felt very comfortable working with Captain Dubé and myself. Battalion Chief Tamillow, decided I would work the day shift and Captain Dubé would work the night shift. This would allow us to develop a better working relationship with our Israeli counterparts.

The Israeli plan was to remove or de-layer the building from the top to bottom using cranes and search each void space as it was uncovered. The building had suffered a pancake type collapse with some lean-to voids on one side. Using our Stanley hammers, we drilled holes in large slabs and our Israeli counterparts ran chains through them and hooked the chains to a crane and then removed the slabs.

Many times uncut rebar would stop the crane, and a rescuer would use a cutting torch to free it. Having only one cutting torch caused great delays. Realizing we could enhance this operation, we offered both our electric and hydraulic rebar cutters, explaining that our generators would be needed because their generators were incompatible.

A long list of tools and equipment were sent to our Logisticsions and within 20 minutes a forward tool cache was set up. The tool cache was set up near the Israeli tool cache on top of a utility vault next to the Ufundi House. During the next two days both Israeli and U.S. rescuers would make use of both tool caches, as if they were one.

As we uncovered bodies, the Kenyan Red Cross would move in with a large number of people to remove them. At one point we counted 120 people working on top of the pile. At times this became dangerous with cranes swinging large slabs of concrete overhead. They would often block our personnel from moving to a safe area. We requested an extra person to help observe and keep things safe.

Some of these removals required the use of our Stanley tools and rebar cutters. Our rescue personnel used the large tools and guided the

Kenyans on the best methods to free the bodies. As the rubble pile was reduced, a large back hoe began to reach into the pile and drag debris down to the street.

Again, our personnel watched closely for exposed bodies as the machine removed the debris and stopped it when one was found. The cranes and the back hoe were operated by Israeli and Kenyan operators

As the pile was reduced, so was our presence on the site. Many of our tools remained on the pile as they were being used by the Kenyans. As bulldozers were brought in our personnel retrieved many of our Stanley tools, and generators, leaving only one Stanley as a contingency. During each 24-hour period an average of 30 bodies were recovered. Our team operated at the Ufundi House for two and one-half days.

Security and Other Foreign Agencies at Site

- Diplomatic Security Agents provided security at Embassy.
- United States Marines provided security at Embassy.
- Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) part of the Department Agency for International Development (AID) was responsible for the overall American rescue operation.
- FBI was tasked with investigation and evidence collection.
- United States Navy (Seabees battalion from Guam) performed cleanup operations inside Embassy after our departure.
- Israeli National Rescue Team
- French National Rescue Team

Building Construction

- US Embassy. Five-story building with a basement and subbasement. Constructed of reinforced concrete. Able to withstand substantial bomb blast. Exterior remained in remarkably good condition. Interior was completely destroyed.
- Ufundi House. Five-story building with a penthouse. Constructed of rein-

forced concrete. Contained several small businesses and a secretarial school.

- Cooperative Bank Building. Twenty-two-story steel skeletal European designed building. Severely damaged.
- Various Office Buildings. Reinforced concrete most five- to eight- stories reinforced concrete, some structural damage but mostly windows and doors were damaged.

lies in our absence. The daily teleconferences with updates of our activities and their availability to assist our families 24-hours-a-day was deeply appreciated. ❖

Sleeping / Eating Arrangements

- Two local hotels provided rooms.
- Hotels provided meals at the hotel.
- MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) were consumed at the blast site.

Lessons Learned

Urban Search and Rescue marking system. Our team members had full understanding of the markings but were confusing to the Embassy staff. Signs using plain language were used to warn of hazards.

Return

We landed at Andrews Air Force Base on August 16, 1998, nine days after activation. We were greeted by Chief Gaines, other OFDA/AID dignitaries, and most importantly, our families. We celebrated our return at a reception held at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Academy and were deactivated at 2130 hours.

At our debriefing we discussed the success of the mission and the tasks we completed. A large portion of our success was due to the assistance provided by OFDA staff members Pete Bradford, Peter Henderson, Sydel Maher, and Steve Catlin. Their presence and logistical support allowed us to concentrate on our core operation.

Finally, we are grateful for the support the fire department provided to our fami-



Members of the VA TF1 Blue Team walk from quarters at a local hotel to the bomb site for an early exchange of shift.



August 16, 1998, was a joyous day for VA TF1 task force members and their families. After nine days of deployment in Nairobi, Kenya, the team arrived at Andrews Air Force Base to be greeted by family and department personnel.

Safety Issues, Always A Priority

By Captain I Charles S. Ruble
Safety Officer, VA TF-1
Station 12, C-Shift

The sign that appears on many mirrors in fire and rescue stations throughout Fairfax County reads: "You're looking at the person most responsible for your safety!" This came to mind many times during our deployment to Nairobi, Kenya. As one of the two safety officers on the mission, it became apparent, due to the magnitude of the situation, that personal safety had to be a top priority in every team member's mind. The following issues of safety had to be faced daily.

- As this was a terrorist action, the human threat could never be underestimated at the work site and at the living quarters. This threat resulted in moving the team from one hotel to another during the mission. Accountability of personnel was maintained throughout the mission—members took this threat to their safety to heart.
- The threat at the work site came in many forms. Exposure to asbestos, body fluids, and dealing with the efforts of other rescue teams whose safety practices were less stringent than ours. At one point, the team working on the main site had large sections of crumbling steel reinforced concrete being

moved directly over their heads while a large shovel was pulling rubble off a pile not more than a foot from where they were working. Another shovel began to pull a portion of a collapsed wall out of the rubble, which would have cut off the team's escape route and potentially cause a secondary collapse. This action was being directed by another rescue team with no safety control. There was an ongoing threat of serious injury throughout this mission. Due to the combined efforts of all team members at the site, no one was seriously injured.

- The size of the incident was itself a threat because our team was separated to perform search and rescue missions in other buildings within a block area of the point of detonation.
- Environmental safety issues were stressed throughout the mission regarding water purity. Bottled water was always close at hand to insure safe drinking water. A few task force members did become ill on the mission but were quickly back in action thanks to our medical team.



It was through the efforts of each team member that the mission was completed with minimal injury and illness. ❖

Safety issues were presented in many forms: environmental issues; the threat of terrorist activity; bomb site hazards such as exposure to asbestos, body fluids and crowded working conditions. VA TF1 was the only team at the bomb site that had a safety officer on the scene at all times. Master Technician Michael J. Marks (Station 18, B-Shift) (left) and Earl Shughart (center) are pictured at the work site along with Kenyan and Israeli personnel.

The Technical Team

*By Captain II James M. Chinn
Technical Team Manager, VA TF-1
Station 20, B-Shift*

On Friday, August 7, 1998, the Department's Urban Search and Rescue Team was deployed to Nairobi, Kenya. There seemed to be a little mix up in the notification and activation. Once the activation was ordered and the department agreed to accept the mission, the team jumped into action. As always, the hard working crew at Station 18 went into action and performed with distinction. Technician Donald C. Booth and crew (Station 18, C-Shift) began the never-ending task of making the cache ready and ensuring we had everything to accomplish an out-of-country mission. The logistics group was ready well ahead of the required six hour departure minimums placed on us by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. We received the call at the academy saying the trucks were loaded and ready for departure to Andrews Air Force Base. Unfortunately, we were still waiting for the plane. They were told to stand by the phone and wait for further instructions.

I met with Captain I Gerald Jaskulski to see what kind of communications issues we were facing. I wanted to see if there was a chance that we would have radio communications when we left the Academy. As always Jazz gave me the "OH SURE, NO PROBLEM." For many years communications was always a big problem. Jazz asked me if we could take Frank Stoda on this deployment along with Technician Gary E. Morin (Station 22, B-Shift). Fortunately, we were able to squeeze him in because we were short personnel in the technical information

section. This was Frank's first mission and first hand look at what the team was actually faced with on actual deployments.

For the first time, we had excellent communications the entire time. The radios worked on and off the site. We could communicate from the work site to the hotel and back. The satellite phone worked back home so we could keep the department and families informed through daily teleconferences. Jazz and the rest of the Communications Section deserve a big round of applause.

Two hours into the activation order we were



Communications Specialist Captain I Gerald Jaskulski monitors communications at the work site and tracks the accountability of team personnel.

still without any structural engineers. Dean Tills was on vacation, and Stan Murphy was unavailable to accept the mission. I called Renato Ravazzoto the newest member of our team. His first response was that he was non-deployable because he lacked much of his equipment. After a brief discussion with Captain I Bernard D. Bickham, we decided a team without a

structural engineer was like responding to a fire without hose. We couldn't properly do the job. I called Renato back and asked if he had a passport and with luck he did. I advised him at that point he was deployable and to please pack and report to the Academy as soon as possible, and that we would furnish any equipment he may be lacking. Again this was his first deployment—worst of all his first exposure to the fire service. I must say he caught on rather quickly.

The old Haz Maters, Master Technician Dean R. Sherick (Fire Prevention Division) and Lieutenant James J. (J.J.) Walsh (Station 1, A-Shift),

responded as always—willing and eager to go. Lieutenant Walsh, who responded from Ocean City, still made it without a doubt.

Their job was to constantly monitor atmospheric conditions and look for any hazardous materials to insure both team safety and the safety of the canines. Although they didn't have much to do, it's always a good feeling knowing that they are there for our safety. They blend well with the rest of the team and are able to fill in wherever needed. Dean was constantly con-

the video over to Anne Press (Academy) to put together an edited edition of the footage taken. Hopefully, if the plan comes together, we will have copies available to all team personnel.

All in all, I think the mission was an immense success. There were a few minor details we need to work out but I believe everything was addressed in the after action reports. Thanks to all who deployed and the members behind the scenes that helped out beyond belief. You all made our jobs easier. ❖



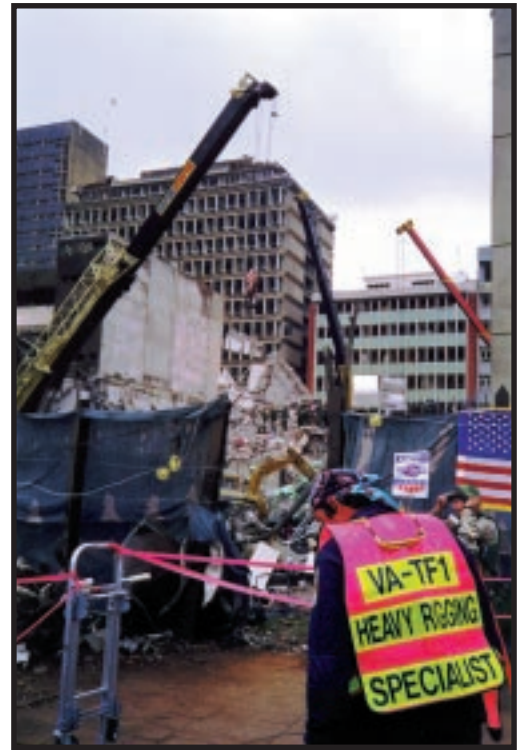
Hazardous Materials Specialist Master Technician Dean R. Sherick records shift information for his unit action log.

cerned with the well being of the team and was keeping me apprised as to any issues that come up regarding hazardous materials.

As always, the heavy riggers Fire-fighter Kit R. Hessel (Station 29, B-Shift) and Earl Shugart did a good job, although there were not many picks to be made. They immediately made themselves busy monitoring the structural stability of the buildings and assisted in any way they could. Great job in removing the vehicles from the back of the Embassy.

Last, but not least, we welcomed Heidi Crabtree to the team. She filled the technical information part of the team. She did an excellent job with documentation, photo, and video work. She managed to put together a collage of pictures and turned

Heavy Rigging specialist Earl Shugart prepares equipment to monitor structural movement in adjacent buildings at the bomb site.



Rescue Squad and Heavy Rigging specialists help the FBI with evidence recovery removal of vehicles damaged in the explosion.

Families, Just A Phone Call Away

By Deputy Chief Jim M. Strickland (Retired)
Task Force Leader, VA TF-1

One of the most gratifying duties I had during the deployment to Kenya was to be the point of contact for the daily family teleconference. They were held everyday at 9 p.m. Nairobi time (2 p.m. EDT) and allowed all family members an opportunity to dial into the Department's teleconferencing system so everyone could hear the same information all at once.

I considered the duty a privilege and an extremely important part of the mission, because the information flow between the team, the department, and families was crucial to the overall success of the mission. Unlike Oklahoma City, where calling home was made easy and opportunities frequent, it was a totally different story in Kenya. I knew that family members were depending on our

daily teleconference as their primary source of information on the team's progress 8,500 miles away. With a responsibility like that, whatever I said on the teleconference was going to be taken to heart by the families.

Since the team was operating on a 24-hour shift for the first several days, I did the call-in from the Base of Operations (BO) on the Embassy grounds using the satellite telephone. Even with the noise from the generators and the other activity around the task force control center, the

quality of the telephone hook-up was fairly good, sometimes it was hard to hear questions from family members. After we had ceased 24-hour operations, I did the remainder of the calls from the hotel, where the quality was exceptional. I want to thank Communications Specialist Captain I Gerry Jaskulski, who helped me through my technical difficulties and always got me dialed in at the correct time.



Daily teleconferences were a crucial link for department personnel and VA TF1 members and their families. Pictured from left to right: Chief Glenn A. Gaines, Battalion Chief Jeffrey L. Donaldson (Battalion 6, C-Shift), Deputy Chief Eric D. Walker (C-Shift), Firefighter Michael J. McQuade (Station 25, C-Shift), and Battalion Chief Larry B. Johnson (Operations).

My purpose was to give as accurate a picture of our daily routine as I could and provide the families and the department a sense of what life and conditions were like in Nairobi. Everyday I would tell the families about the weather, our objectives for the operational work period, our team accomplishments, and our recreational side trips.

I tried to describe the shattered condition of the Embassy and the Ufundi House and where the BO was in relationship to how I believed they were viewing the site on television. I doubt I did justice to a base surrounded by razor wire and heavily armed U.S. Marines, not to mention all the local Kenyan security guards with their weapons and the Kenyan military and local police. I said one night that I had never seen a work site with so many people carrying guns.

I thought the families might be interested in the hotel where we were staying, how the food was, how we got from the hotel to the Embassy, and who was working days and who was working nights. I also kept them informed of any injuries or illnesses of team members. In return, they asked many thoughtful questions and passed on personal messages to team members, which I delivered that night or the next morning for the Red Team. On one occasion, we received promotional announcements including that of Captain I Gregory A. Bunch (Station 16, A-Shift) as well as department activities. There were a million things I could have said, but as much as I tried, it was impossible to convey the complete sense of what it was like to be on the mission. Every night after work, I would think of something else I should have said.

Some issues defied an easy description. It was hard to describe the team's assignment of searching and uncovering bodies in the rubble of the Ufundi House everyday without getting too graphic or too descriptive. Nevertheless, the families had a right to know what the team was doing and rightfully the department was interested in the extended stress management measures being employed and the well-being of the team members.

Changing hotels brought out concern for our safety. I knew this would be the "hot topic" that night, since local Channel 7 was in the lobby of the Hilton when the Blue Team boarded the bus and would surely broadcast the move. That night, I reported exactly what OFDA had told us—people in the U.S. Government were responsible for assessing security situations and they felt it was best to move the team. Nothing more said.

There was no specific threat that we were told of, just a security assessment. That was all the information we had, and even I felt this was going to be a little thin to sell back home. I wasn't sure if people would believe that story. I knew Channel 7 was asking OFDA's Pete Henderson for more information and that they would put their own spin on the move. However, that's all I could say because that's all I knew. To us, it wasn't important to the mission objectives where we stayed. Thankfully, Chief Gaines helped the situation with some informa-

tion he received the next day from OFDA in Washington, which we did not have in Kenya, and that seemed to satisfy the situation for the remainder of the mission.

I could imagine that our security and safety was the issue most important to the families and to the department. I did not want to over dramatize our situation, even though it was uncomfortable at times when we moved around town and saw several organized marches go past the bombing site. We never felt in danger of further terrorist activity.

Since the Embassy was in a depressed section of the city, our primary concern was more with the high incidence of street crime, which we were warned about. We were taking all the necessary security precautions, and there was nothing else anyone could do.

On every occasion of the teleconference, I knew it was important to be as truthful and accurate as I could be. Some of the questions from home involved the safety and well being of the team members. I recognized that if I did not provide direct answers or was perceived to be untruthful on any subject or on any question, the process would lose credibility with the families and they would begin to seek information from other sources. If we destroyed this important information link with home, it would have lasting repercussions on future deployments of the Urban Search & Rescue Team. The family teleconference is crucial for deployments when regular communications between the department, family members, and the team doesn't exist.

I would like to thank all of the families who called in regularly on the teleconferences during their work hours for their lasting support for the team while we were deployed. I can't tell you how nice it was to hear from all of the families everyday, and I wish everyone on the team could have had the pleasure of being a part of this process. I just wish I could have conveyed more thoroughly to the team, the tremendous feeling of support from the families and department that came across during the teleconferences everyday and to the families how dedicated and professional the team members were while carrying out their mission. ❖

USAID Mobilizes Virginia Task Force I

By Deputy Chief John J. Brown, Jr.

Plans Officer, VA TF-1

Headquarters, EMS Administration

On August 7, 1998, Virginia Task Force I (VA TF-1) was requested by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to mobilize for deployment to Nairobi, Kenya, in response to the bombing of the U.S. Embassy. The event spanned ten days from activation on August 7 through return on August 16, 1998. The task force mission was to search the U.S. Embassy and surrounding structures for possible survivors as well as assist Kenyan authorities and other international groups with the retrieval of human remains.

The fire and rescue department (FRD) was informally notified of the potential for mobilization at approximately 0830 hours on August 7, 1998. This information was passed from Captain II Dewey H. Perks (Station 28, B-Shift), who was working part-time at NASAR, to Deputy Chief John Brown and relayed to Assistant Chief Mark S. Wheatley. Formal notification of the activation order was received at 1100 hours by Assistant Chief Wheatley, and the team began to mobilize. Pages were sent to team managers from Station 18. By 1200 hours, Captain I Bernard D. Bickham (Station 18, B-Shift) had arrived at the Fire and Rescue Academy and initiated the call-up process to fill the 65 positions necessary for deployment. He was assisted by Captain I Robert C. Dubé (Academy). Captain Perks and Sonja Heritage, along with her canine, Otto, were requested by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to precede the team to Kenya with other government officials and departed at approximately 1300 hours.

From 1100 until 1600 hours, team members began to arrive at the Academy and process through the check-in procedures. Red and yellow packs were weighed in the high bay area and medical checks were performed in classroom two.

By 1630 hours, the roster was filled and the buses were on site to transport the team to Andrews Air Force Base. Food and beverages were supplied to the team by the Resource Management Section. It was evident at this time that there was an issue with securing an aircraft for our departure. Deputy Chief Kenneth L. Jones (Academy) was tasked with being the liaison between the fire and rescue department, OFDA, and Department of Defense (DOD) for air transport issues. The team was briefed at 1900 hours and dinner was supplied prior to departure from the Academy at 2300 hours.

The aircraft was loaded with personnel and equipment by 0400 hours on August 8, 1998. The aircraft then began its 17 hour journey to Nairobi, Kenya, with 63 task force members and three OFDA staff. The time was used for much needed rest and a light meal. Task Force members found out very quickly that the temperature in the cabin of an Air Force C5-A Galaxy drops to the low 50's Fahrenheit when airborne. Everyone scrambled to find anything they could to keep them warm during the flight.

The aircraft arrived at approximately 0400 hours (Kenya time) on August 9, 1998, in total darkness. Plans were quickly developed to transport the team to our quarters at the Hilton Hotel and to unload the cache from the aircraft. The task force leaders and an advance party proceeded to the blast site while others unloaded the aircraft onto British military vehicles. By 0800 hours, the entire team had arrived at the hotel, and a briefing was scheduled for 0830 hours.

The team was briefed regarding the site and the operations underway by the Israeli Defense Forces. Security, safety, and unity of command were stressed in what was to become a difficult and politically sensitive operation for our team. The task force was divided into two shifts, Red (days) and Blue (nights), then proceeded to the

U.S. Embassy to set up the Base of Operations (BO). Contacts were made with Kenyan officials and the Israeli Defense Forces while the embassy was searched for nine missing Kenyans who may have been in or near the embassy. By 1600 hours on August 9, it was decided that a minimal crew would staff the BO until 0800 hours the next day and act as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) for the Israelis, if requested.

By Monday, August 10, 1998, VA TF-1 had made significant progress in coordinating efforts with the Israelis. For the next three days, the task force worked 24-hours a day until recovery operations ceased at 1700 hours on Wednesday, August 12, 1998. VA TF-1 assisted in the recovery of approximately 100 bodies from the Ufundi House and several body parts from the U.S. Embassy compound. The task force assisted the FBI with evidence recovery on Thursday, August 13, 1998, and began the process of demobilization. Equipment and supplies were identified for donation to the Nairobi Fire Service, the Kenyan Red Cross, and the Kenyatta National Hospital. Several tools were transferred to the FBI to assist them in their evidence gathering. Retired Deputy Chief James M. Strickland and a select group formally turned over the donated items to the Nairobi Fire Service at 1300 hours on Friday, August 14, 1998. Our personnel spent several hours demonstrating and teaching the proper operation and maintenance of the equipment.

Additionally, the task force continued to assist the FBI and packed the remaining cache for transport on Friday, August 14, 1998. By 2300 hours, only a small amount of communications equipment was left for loading. The task force spent most of the day on Saturday, August 15, 1998, defusing and critiquing the mission. We expected the session, which began at 0830 hours, to last approximately three hours; however, we concluded at 1630 hours. At 1830 hours on Saturday, members of the logistics section took the cache to the Nairobi International Airport for loading onto the commercial aircraft for the return trip. The U.S. State Department had contracted a team of six Kenyan nationals to load the aircraft; how-

ever, rain, communications barriers, and other issues with the contractors made it necessary to ask Lieutenant Ben A. Dye and the members of Rescue Squad 4 at 2300 hours to assist in the loading process. By 0230 hours, the aircraft was loaded, and the team returned to quarters to pack personal belongings. At 0800 hours on Sunday, August 16, 1998, VA TF-1 departed Nairobi, Kenya, and arrived at Andrews Air Force Base at approximately 1700 hours (Eastern Standard Time), mission accomplished.

The mission was successful in a number of ways. The task force mobilized quickly during a particularly high leave usage period and was ready to depart the Academy by 1600 hours. The operations involved working in a foreign country where a terrorist act had occurred with the possibility of a secondary attack or other dangerous situation. The task force provided personnel and other resources to the search efforts at the U.S. Embassy and the surrounding structures in a diplomatic and professional manner, completing search operations 84 hours after arrival in the country. The FBI was particularly grateful for the technical assistance provided for their evidence gathering. The Nairobi Fire Service, Kenyan Red Cross, and the Kenyatta National Hospital received much needed equipment (including training) and supplies to deal with future incidents.

While this deployment was not perfect, it had a great many positive aspects. The support mechanisms such as the daily teleconferences for the families; the efforts of Deputy Chief Jones, Captain II David P. Carpenter (Operations), Linda Polizzi (Resource Management Section), Brenda Tincher (Personnel Section), and many others was phenomenal. I sincerely appreciate the hard work of the team members who deployed to Kenya and those who supported the mission here at home. ♦

A Special Thank You For Your Support

By Debbie Williams

Wife of Technician Charles A. Williams

Station 14, C-Shift

On August 7, 1998, two of our embassies in Africa were bombed. Within 24 hours, 65 of Fairfax County's best were flying out of Andrews Air Force Base en route to Africa to help with search and rescue. Of course you all know this, you have heard it time and time again. But you may not have heard about several individuals in the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department who kept our lives and sanity intact.

Within 34 hours after the bombing the ones left behind all dialed into a conference call, "most of us called it our LIFE LINE," set up to reach out and touch Nairobi, Kenya. With the assistance of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department—Chief Glenn A. Gaines, Captain II David P. Carpenter (Operations), Captain I Gary B. Bunch (Station 18, C-Shift) and Retired Deputy Chief James M. Strickland, we received up-to-the minute news everyday at 2 p.m. If team members were sick, hurt, or going on to safari, Deputy Chief Strickland was the one to tell us. Even though he flowered it a bit, we still appreciated every word that came to us. When Captain Carpenter would ask for questions you could hear a pin drop (some of us would rather listen than talk), because when it came to 'Question Time' we knew the call would soon be ending. And you could always count on hearing Chief Gaines on the line with one more question; his booming, yet strong and comforting voice holding that connection for just a little longer. By the second day, we had Tim Ferguson with the Employee Assistance Program on the line, telling us to call if there was anything we needed to talk about in handling this situation and our day-to-day lives. Battalion Chief Larry B. Johnson (Operations) had the grueling task of monitoring the emergency pager.

But even after the conference call was over and we tried to get back with our routine (not

as easy as it sounds), Captain Bunch made sure those not able to make the conference calls were contacted with the news. He also had every station that had personnel over in Africa calling the homes and making sure everyone was OK, asking if anything was needed, and informing them of the next day's conference call.

The list goes on. There were firefighters like Firefighter Rocco Alvaro (Station 8, A-Shift) who cut the grass for a fellow firefighter's family unable to do it themselves. Captain Bunch, who had gone to the Oklahoma bombing to help with search and rescue in 1995, also gave out his home number so his wife, Ann, could answer questions about what to expect when our loved ones came home. Ann Bunch was a tireless supporter to those of us who cried on her capable shoulders.

Fairfax County made sure our buses arrived on time so that we could have "front-row seating" on the tarmac when the PLANE landed at Andrews Air Force Base.

We could not forget to say thank you to Kit Hesse's girlfriend, Maggie Abrashoff, who works with MCI, and with the assistance of Battalion Chief Johnson, was able to get each of us eight minutes of free long distance calling so we could call Kenya ourselves.

These men and women who went over to Nairobi, Kenya, to assist with the search and rescue are heroes, but so are the Fairfax County firefighters left here. They continued to protect county residents despite staffing shortages. Yet they still found time to stay in touch with those of us who thought nothing was as important as getting our loved ones home to safe ground.

We, the "TEAM SUPPORTERS" would like to say thank you for your caring and unselfishness. ❖

Frank Keating
Governor of Oklahoma

August 10, 1998

Members of VA TF-1
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue
4100 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

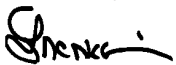
Dear Friends,

I know you won't receive this until you return from your deployment to Kenya, but I wanted to offer Oklahoma's gratitude and support as you once again respond to help fellow Americans in trouble.

Many of us recognized familiar faces from the news photos from Kenya—and our first thoughts were that those who were victimized by this terrible act are in the best of hands.

We will always remember you steadfast labors and courage on behalf of our citizens in 1995. Now, as you once again stand with those attacked by terrorism, you are representing all that is good about our country. May God continue to bless you and yours.

Sincerely,



Frank Keating



Virginia Task Force 1 members were recognized by Congress for their assistance following the terrorist bombing in Nairobi, Kenya. Elizabeth H. Kreidler and search canine Garret receive a certificate presented by Ambassador Harriet C. Babbitt, Deputy Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

From: **Steve_Mabrey**
Date sent: **Thu, 13 Aug 98 16:03:05**
To: **webteam@s92fsn1.co.fairfax.va.us**
Subject: **Keep up the good work!**

When I saw the buildings which had been damaged by the bombing in Nairobi, it reminded me so much of the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building here in Oklahoma City. It's been over three years, but I can remember it like yesterday, seeing the smoke rise from downtown Oklahoma City. I could look out my office window and see the north face of the building, just 1 1/2 miles south of here.

I know how exhausting, both physically and emotionally, the rescue work is. Several members of my church are firefighters and were involved in the rescue efforts here.

I just wanted to encourage you to keep up the good work! Thanks for your commitment to excellence, and devotion to a tough job. You make us in Oklahoma City proud!

From: **Glynda Mayo Hall**
To: **"webteam@fire.co.fairfax.va.us"**
<webteam@s92fsn1.co.fairfax.va
Subject: **In Appreciation to the Fire and Rescue Team**
Date sent: **Wed, 12 Aug 1998 17:42:31 -0400**

This is just to thank you for the many ways you give to our communities and to other communities especially abroad at this time. May God bless your giving with special abundance. You are an inspiration for goodness to many. Thank you one and all for your valor.

Glynda Mayo Hall



VA TF-1 Profile

**Base of Operations
Nairobi, Kenya**

**Battalion Chief
Michael Tamillow
Task Force Leader**

**Deputy Chief (Retired)
James M. Strickland
Task Force Leader**

Base of Operations: Functional from Sunday, August 9, 1998, through Friday, August 15, 1998. The Base of Operations was made operational in three hours.

Task force Mission: Disaster response operations: search and rescue, cave-in, medical operations including physicians, paramedics, logistics, and command and control.

Square miles in response area: USAID, overseas: Europe and Africa (deployed 8,500 miles from home). FEMA program: 50 states and all United States territories.

Specific hazardous/target areas: Large metropolitan city of 2.5 million people, terrorist bombing of the United States Embassy.

Assigned to task force: 65 personnel, 55,000 lbs. equipment cache, cargo vehicle, and VA TF-1 tractor trailer.

Task force personnel: *Red Team:* BC Michael Tamillow, Capt. II Michael T. Reilly, Capt. II Dewey H. Perks, Capt. I Bernard D. Bickham, Dr. Anthony Macintyre, Capt. II James M. Chinn, Lt. Michael P. Regan, Lt. Ronald C. Sacra, Capt. II Joseph M. Kaleda, Lt. Chester O. Hill, Lt. Lorenzo M. Thrower, Renato Rauzzolo, Capt. I Gary B. Bunch, Lt. David P. Conrad, Lt. James P. Bernazani, MTech. Thomas W. Reedy, Hideko Yamaguchi, MTech. Dean R. Sherick, Sonja Heritage, MTech. Kent E. Watts, Tech. Charles A. Williams, Tech. Kurt A. Hoffman, Lt. Bruce A. Neuhaus, Tech. Chris M. Matsos, MTech. Michael J. Marks, MTech. Michael J. Stone, Earl Shughart, Tech. Gary E. Morin, Heidi Crabtree, Frank Stoda, Tech. Barry A. Anderson, Tech. Donald C. Booth, and Tech. Andrew J. Hubert. *Blue Team:* BC James M. Strickland (Retired), DC John J. Brown, Capt. I Charles S. Ruble, Capt. II Garrett L. Dyer, Capt. I Robert C. Dubé, Dr. Scott Weir, Tech. William E. Teal, Elizabeth Kreidler, Susan Mingle, MTech. Michael A. Istvan, Tech. Thomas P. Feehan, Tech. Bonnie J. Tobalske, MTech. Randal A. Leatherman, Tech. Rex E. Strickland, Tech. Mark J. Plunkett, Tech. William M. Bertone, FF Joseph D. Merritt, Lt. Jerome I. Williams, Lt. James J. Walsh, Lt. Ben A. Dye, MTech. Christian A. Bastin, MTech. John C. Mayers, MTech. John Chabal, Tech. Dean A. Scott, MTech. Thomas J. Griffin, Tech. Robert J. Zoldos, Act. Tech. Kit R. Hessel, Capt. I Gerald Jaskulski, Tech. David L. Taylor, Capt. II Dean W. Cox, Tech. Clyde M. Buchanan.

Line Copy can be viewed on the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Web Site.

Our Web Site address is: <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/fire>

Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department

Attn: Public Information and Life Safety Education Section
4100 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

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